



State of Arizona
Department of Education

Reading First Competitive Subgrants

Reading First is authorized under Title I, Part B, Subpart 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*. Reading First is the largest – and yet most focused – early reading initiative this country has ever undertaken. The program will provide support to the ADE, local educational agencies, and schools to implement proven methods of early reading instruction in classrooms. By applying the best and most rigorous scientifically-based reading research and coordinating with other federal, state, and local initiatives aimed at improving reading instruction, this important new initiative will help to improve student achievement and ensure that all children learn to read well by the end of 3rd grade. Through Reading First, subgrants of approximately \$250,000 or more per school per year for three years (with a possible additional 3-year renewal period) are available to LEAs that meet the eligibility criteria. The ADE has developed eligibility and selection criteria that distinguish among applicants based on the need to improve reading achievement and the research-base and quality of the programs they propose to implement.

Purpose of Reading First Program

Reading First schools must be willing to:

- **Implement scientifically – based reading programs, materials and instruction in a K-3 comprehensive system;**
- **Participate in high-quality, relevant professional development that is in-depth and on-going and supported with coaches/mentors;**
- **Use valid and reliable screening, diagnostic, on-going classroom and outcome assessments to tailor instruction; and**
- **Participate in statewide accountability, leadership structures, and program evaluation.**

1. Definition of Eligibility for Reading First Competitive Subgrants

A local educational agency that meets these criteria is eligible to apply for Reading First funds:

1. The LEA must serve 25 percent or more of K-3 students reading below grade level. "Grade level" is defined as "Meeting the Standard," measured by AIMS 3rd Grade Reading.
2. In addition, at least 20 percent of the students served by the LEA must reside in households with incomes below the poverty line.
3. In addition, the LEA must have jurisdiction over one of the following:
 - a. A significant number or percentage of Title I Schools identified for School Improvement;
 - b. A geographic area that includes a designated empowerment zone or an enterprise community under part 1 of subchapter U of chapter 1 of the Internal Revenue Code; or
 - c. The highest numbers or percentages of children who are counted under allocations for Title I, Part A.

Priority will be given to LEAs that:

- 1) Satisfactorily met compliance to federal requirements over the past two-year period;
- 2) Are complying with all state accountability standards (AZ LEARNS) and reporting requirements of ADE;
- 3) Plan to use reading programs that meet ADE criteria of SBRR aligned programs; and
- 4) Are receiving an Early Reading First Grant.
- 5) Serve a minimum of 200 students. LEAs serving small numbers of students will be encouraged to apply in a consortium.

LEAs were first selected based on the reading achievement scores for their K-3 schools using the 2001 AIMS pass rate for 3rd grade. LEAs with K-3 schools that had a pass rate of 75 percent or less next had to meet at least one of the three items of the second criteria. Those items are poverty rate of the LEA, number of schools identified for school improvement in the LEA, and location of the LEA in an empowerment zone or enterprise community. An LEA that determines that it has been incorrectly omitted and would like to petition to be included as an eligible LEA should contact the AZ Reads office at 602-542-5031 or by e-mail at azreads@ade.az.gov.

2. Schedule of Reading First Subgrant Process

The timeline for the subgrant selection and award process is provided below:

Pre-Application Opens	November 2002
Workshops	November 2002
Pre-Application Due	December 20, 2003
Applicant LEAs notified	January 17, 2003
RFP Opens	January 17, 2003
Workshops	January, February 2003
RFPs due	February 28, 2003
Reading First Approvals	March 31, 2003
Initial Payment Dispersed	May 1, 2003

3. PROCESS FOR AWARDING SUBGRANTS

There will be four phases to the award process. These are described below.

Phase I: Planning

The State will build a knowledge base and build its own capacity in this phase. Information about the goals of the State's Reading Initiative AZ READS, new Arizona reading legislation, policies and procedures, development of its AZ READS web site, and information about Reading First will be disseminated. Guidelines to select and develop assessments, reading programs and curriculum reviews will be developed. The State will also begin training state level trainers in August, 2002 to begin training others in June, 2003. Pre-Application workshops will be held during this phase for all eligible LEAs. The first cycle of subgrant funding will be announced in November of 2002. Interested LEAs will be invited to attend a Pre-Application conference during November, in which funding requirements will be thoroughly explained. Every LEA will be invited to attend one of three Pre-Application workshops, hosted by ADE at three sites in Arizona (Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Tucson). Logistically, these workshop sites are accessible to all LEAs. Announcements will be made through mail and email, requiring confirmation of receipt. In cases where LEAs do not respond, ADE staff will make contact with the LEAs through phone calls.

Phase II: Pre-Application

As has been previously stated, to determine LEA capacity and willingness to use Reading First funds for its stated purpose, ADE will require a pre-application. LEAs will demonstrate how they meet the eligibility requirements. LEAs will submit a self-assessment of the current reading program at each targeted school

that describes the status of and the efforts to improve student reading achievement and a comprehensive appraisal of the identified gaps that need to be addressed. LEAs judged to have sufficient capacity and commitment to comply with Reading First guidelines will be invited to respond to the RFP for Reading First by applying electronically through the ADE Grants System. ADE will accept pre-applications from LEAs in December, 2002. The Pre-Application will be an abbreviated proposal, designed to determine the eligibility, commitment, and capacity to comply with the requirements of Reading First of LEAs advancing to the next stage of the Application process. The Pre-Application will consist of 1) information documenting LEA eligibility 2) assurances from LEAs that they will comply with the requirements of ADE, 3) evidence of the LEAs capacity to implement the Reading First program successfully. LEAs will not be required to submit research, data, timelines, budgets, or other specific information to demonstrate how the subgrant requirements will be met at this point in time. ADE does not wish to place a burden on LEAs that may be unprepared or do not have the capacity to develop Reading First programs during the first cycle of subgrant allocations.

An LEA may write a proposal to serve more than one of its eligible schools. Such proposals must demonstrate that the LEA has the capacity to oversee multiple sites and the commitment to participation by the staff of each site is firm. Each LEA that receives a competitive subgrant must receive at least the same percentage of the Arizona's total Reading First subgrant funds as the LEA received of the total Title I, Part A funds received by all LEAs in Arizona for the preceding fiscal year. This does not create an entitlement to any LEA; it applies to those that successfully meet the subgrant criteria.

LEAs may propose to form a consortium for the purpose of administering a Reading First grant. Each member LEA of the consortium must be an eligible LEA that, as a single applicant, cannot meet the capacity requirements on its own.

Phase III: Subgrant Award Process

Successful applicants will be invited to submit full proposals in February, 2003. Notifications of funding will be released in March, 2003. ADE will host another round of Application workshops in Flagstaff, Phoenix, and Tucson. The full-day conferences will describe:

1. The No Child Left Behind Program,
2. The National and State Reading First philosophies and strategies,
3. LEA eligibility requirements,
4. Scope of Work requirements, including:

- a. Schools to be served,
 - b. The selection criteria for assessments, based on *An Analysis of Reading Assessment Instruments for K-3*, authored by Dr. Edward J. Kame'enui at the University of Oregon and the Reading Leadership Academy Assessment Committee
 - c. Instructional strategies and programs,
 - d. Instructional materials,
 - e. Instructional leadership,
 - f. District and school-based professional development,
 - g. District-based technical assistance,
 - h. Evaluation strategies (compliance to state evaluation plan, with defined roles and responsibilities of SEA/LEA/school),
 - i. Access to print materials,
 - j. Additional criteria, and
 - k. Competitive priorities.
- 5. Budget and budget narrative requirements,
 - 6. Assurances, certifications, and other signature forms,
 - 7. The scoring rubric,
 - 8. Reviewer processes and qualifications,
 - 9. Timelines,
 - 10. Points of contact at:
 - a. ADE, for professional development information and technical assistance;
 - b. Regional Support Centers, for establishment of connections necessary for applications; and
 - c. APRC, for guidance on elements of evaluation.

During the conference, LEAs will meet in small groups with facilitators to discuss concerns. Attendees will then reconvene as a group to walk through questions raised. Questions and responses will be documented and distributed to all LEAs after the three conferences have been completed.

ADE will continue to make available technical assistance to the LEAs to clarify eligibility criteria, the scope of work, and other aspects of the Application process. Communications will remain open with LEAs throughout the Application process, and ADE will do everything possible to assist LEAs in framing the best and highest quality Application possible.

Pre-Applications and applications will be submitted to the Arizona Department of Education on its on-line grants Application system. Reviewers of LEAs' Reading First Applications will be selected by the AZ READS Reading Leadership Advisory Board. Priority will be given to reviewers who, by their resumes, demonstrate strong knowledge of scientifically-based reading research.

The second cycle of funding will be announced in November of 2005. The process will replicate that of the first cycle.

Phase IV: Implementation and Evaluation

In this phase, schools will implement their plans: ongoing professional development of K-3 staff, implementing a scientifically-based reading program, applying scientifically-based teaching strategies, using ongoing diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments, and conducting evaluation of the implementation process with the assistance of ADE management, professional development, and technical assistance staff as well as APRC/RMC evaluators.